

Message Text

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ACTION SIL-01

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INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

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AMEMBASSY BERN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

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AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

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AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

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AMEMBASSY VIENNA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, XG, ILO, ICFTU

SUBJ: THE ICFTU AND THE ILO EUROPEAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE

REF: GENEVA 6334 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. THE EUROPEAN TRADE UNION MEETING TO BE HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE JANUARY ILO EUROPEAN REGIONAL CONFERENCE WAS DISCUSSED AT THE RECENT ICFTU EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING. ACCORDING TO MISSION SOURCES WHO WERE PRESENT AT THE MEETING, THE EXECUTIVE BOARD DECIDED THAT THE ICFTU WILL NOT HAVE A DIRECT ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE TRADE UNION MEETING AT GENEVA BECAUSE IT IS STRICTLY A EUROPEAN MATTER TO BE DEALT WITH ONLY BY EUROPEAN TRADE UNIONS INDIVIDUALLY OR COLLECTIVELY AS THEY CHOOSE. END SUMMARY.

2. AT THE NOVEMBER 21-23 ICFTU EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, ICFTU GENERAL SECRETARY OTTO KERSTEN WAS REPORTEDLY ACCUSED OF TRYING TO INJECT THE ICFTU INTO AN AREA IN WHICH IT HAS NO JURISDICTION. THIS OCCURRED WITH THE PRESENTATION OF AN ICFTU SECRETARIAT POSITION PAPER TO THE EXECUTIVE BOARD WHICH "REINTERATED" ICFTU SUPPORT FOR A EUROPEAN TRADE UNION MEETING IN JANUARY. ICFTU PRESIDENT DONALD MACDONALD SEVERELY CRITICIZED THE SECRETARIAT AND FORCED THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE PAPER ON THE BASIS THAT THE ICFTU HAD NEVER ADOPTED A POSITION ON THE QUESTION IN THE FIRST PLACE AND THEREFORE COULD NOT REITERATE A NON-EXISTENT POLICY.

3. MACDONALD'S ATTACK ON THE POSITION PAPER REPORTEDLY PRECIPITATED A GENERAL DISCUSSION ON THE QUESTION OF FUTURE RELATIONS BETWEEN ICFTU-AFFILIATED UNIONS WITH COMMUNIST UNIONS ON A EUROPEAN LEVEL. A BRITISH TUC POSITION THAT SUCH CONTACTS SHOULD BE DETERMINED BY INDIVIDUAL EUROPEAN UNIONS RATHER THAN THE ICFTU AS A GLOBAL ORGANIZATION WON NEAR UNANIMOUS EXECUTIVE BOARD SUPPORT.

4. AT A NOVEMBER 23 PRESS CONFERENCE FOLLOWING THE MEETING, KERSTEN ANNOUNCED IN VAGUE TERMS THAT THE EXECUTIVE BOARD HAD LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONFIRMED THAT INFORMAL MULTILATERAL CONTACTS AT THE JANUARY CONFERENCE "ARE ONLY CONCEIVABLE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF APPROPRIATE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS THE ILO." HE DID NOT ELABORATE AND HAS BEEN AWAY FROM BRUSSELS SINCE THE BOARD MEETING SO THAT WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH HIM.

5. COMMENT. IN THE VIEW OF MANY ICFTU OBSERVERS, THE

EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION HAS EFFECTIVELY REDUCED IF NOT
ELIMINATED THE POSSIBILITY OF THE ICFTU HAVING A MEANINGFUL
ROLE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE JANUARY EUROPEAN TRADE UNION
MEETING. THIS MAY EXPLAIN ALBERT HEYER'S POSITION REPORTED
IN REFTEL. SINCE, TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, THE EUROPEAN TRADE UNION
CONFEDERATION (ETUC) AT ITS NOVEMBER 24 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MEETING DID NOT ADOPT A POSITION ON THE JANUARY MEETING, IT
WOULD APPEAR AT THIS TIME THAT WESTERN EUROPEAN UNIONS MAY
COME TO GENEVA WITHOUT ANY PREDETERMINED PLANS OR STRATEGY,
A SITUATION WHICH KERSTEN AND OTHERS WERE HOPING TO AVOID.
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